

China on Parade

■ Locals, dignitaries come together to celebrate Chinese New Year with the annual Chinatown parade.

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The 106th annual Golden Dragon Parade snaked its way through Chinatown Feb. 12 in the Year of the Rooster.

The parade drew a number of important participants, including the LAFD, Mayor Jim Hahn and several City Councilmembers.

Here is a history of the parade, taken from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Website:

More than 100 years ago, the Chinese community began to participate in the parades of the City of Los Angeles. In 1898, the Chinese lion and dragon procession were regarded as one of the most beautiful units in the City's annual La Fiesta parade. The Chinese community was applauded for its contribution to the celebration.

The Fiesta committee immediately requested the Chinese community to permanently join this annual event. The Chinese Merchants Association organized and sponsored the lion dance procession in addition to one or two floats. The group also arranged for the use of a dragon from the Chinese community in Marysville, Calif. Subsequently, they raised \$1,500 to acquire a dragon that required 25 men to maneuver. Their units were always considered the main attraction at the Fiesta parade and had always drawn a very enthusiastic and excited crowd.

In 1956, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles (formerly the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce) joined in the celebration. New dragon heads were imported from Hong Kong, and local family association members were hired to perform the cultural dances. In the early 1960s, the lion and dragon dancers would visit every Chinese business along the parade route. Funding for the parade included fundraising dinners and door-to-door solicitations to gather support from Chinatown businesses.

After the Vietnam war in 1975, Indo-Chinese refugees poured into the United States and soon became active in our community. Local family associations, Buddhist temples and community-based organizations mushroomed, and the parade became a focal point of community participation.

Since the 1970s, the parade has had a number of celebrity grand marshals, including Bruce Lee, David Carradine, Haing Ngor and Lindsay Wagner. The parade, originally a Friday night fixture, was moved to Saturdays to accommodate more viewers and participants.

Since the mid-1980s, the Golden Dragon parade has expanded to include almost two dozen floats, multiple marching bands, government officials, dignitaries, entertainers, local business leaders and cultural groups. The parade's theme emphasizes ethnic diversity, Chinese culture and exposure to Chinese businesses. The parade continues to be a rich and diverse experience for Angelenos of all ages and ethnicities.

Congratulations to the L.A. Chinese Chamber of Commerce on another wonderful parade.



Miss L.A. Chinatown and her court.



The beginning of the 106th Golden Dragon Parade.



South Pasadena Mayor Mike Ten.



Assemblymember Judy Chu.



Line dancers.



An antique fire truck.



Councilmember Ed Reyes.



Mayor James Hahn.



Koreatown Queen and court.



Senator Jack Scott.



Celebrity entertainer Kelly Hu.



Mayor of Diamond Bar Wen Chang.



A dragon.



From left: Senator Gloria Romero and Henry Lo, Harvey School Board Member.



Senator Richard Alarcon.



Celebrity actor James Hong.



Councilmember Tom LaBonge.



Councilmembers Jan Perry and Wendy Greuel.



USC football players Brandon and Ryan Ting.



Councilmember Bernard Parks.



Councilmember Alex Padilla.



A street performer.



A youngster lighting a firecracker.



From left: Mayor of Walnut Tom King with Councilman Joaquin Lim.



Gordon Tokumatsu of KNBC channel 4.



A rooster.



A fire truck.